

NOVELIST, PAINTER, FARMER

THE CREATOR OF MISS SELINA LUE IN TOWN.

Miss Maria Thompson Daviess Chats of Literature and Agriculture—Chicken Motif in Her New Book—Painted Miniatures Before Beginning to Write.

Miss Maria Thompson Daviess, who raises cattle and chickens on a Tennessee farm, makes arts and crafts jewelry for herself and her friends, exhibited miniatures for two years in Paris and wrote one of Bobbs-Merrill's "best sellers" last year, is in town for a few days overseeing the launching of a second novel, a book she calls "The Road to Providence," of

with calico cushions stuffed down each back. And the author cites as motive for writing a quotation from the book: "You—you—Miss Cynthia hesitated, trying to give coherence to a thought. Miss Selina Lue had heard voiced before, if you were being mother bird to your own you couldn't." "Miss Cynthia, honey," said Miss Selina Lue as she scraped the last drop of milk into the spoon and skillfully administered it to the nodding head of Flarity, the brother of Carrots, I think the good Lord intended that a mother should come into this world with every child, but sometimes she don't get borned when it does; and sometimes, sometimes the mother is borned and the child ain't there. The mother job is one that ain't cut out to suit everybody, and them it fits have

on it pleasant like, but not to take too much notice until it roots good." "Don't you know every woman's heart is soft toward courting whether she's in it or not?" "But ain't it a good thing to think how there's a guiding hand, child, a guiding hand?" "Don't nothing put the heart in a broke down woman like a little loving." "Looks like a man must think his own life have been a grand success if he goes to a directing of his son's." In "The Road to Providence" Mother Mayberry, who is close kin to Miss Selina Lue, is a seer in hen lore, and her hens roved in individuality and personal traits. Through her quaint sayings the chicken motif is sustained from cover to cover. For instance, in the first chapter says

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**BOSTON'S FLYING DUTCHMAN.**  
The Story of the hapless Peter Rugg, Reprinted for Moderns.  
"Peter Rugg, the Missing Man," a little green volume put out by John W. Luce & Co. of Boston, is a reprint story of that name by William Austin, published first in *Buckingham's New England Galaxy* for September, 10, 1821. It is the story of a man who spends his life driving a horse and chaise toward Boston. The man is Peter Rugg, and the story goes that he left Boston with his little daughter Betty about the time of the Boston massacre (1770). At Menotomy, now Arlington, a few miles out of Boston, a storm overtook them, and although invited to spend the night by a friend Rugg swore an oath either to get home that night or never to see home again. He never reached home, and thenceforth



Photo copyright, 1910, by M. W. Wiley. MISS MARIA THOMPSON DAVIESS AND "LITTLE SISTER."

which the advance sale has been 100,000 copies. "I reckon there's no doubt now about the book's being successful," she says, "but when I heard of the sale of my first, 'Miss Selina Lue,' last year you could have knocked me over with a feather," and the author laughs in a manner that betrays her Blue Grass nativity.

"I was out walking over the hill with my farmyard twenty chickens, three Jersey cows and my thirty-two-year-old horse—when a telegram was brought me from my publishers congratulating me on the success of the book. The farmyard shared my triumph; together we all ran back to the house to break the news to the rest of the family, clucking, crowing, whinnying, &c."

And having got a taste of literary success the farmer-painter thinks now that she'll devote most of her time to being an author, though she does not pretend to be literary.

"I had a good reason for trying to write, though," she says. "My grandmother, whose name was Maria Thompson Daviess, just like mine, edited the first woman's page in this country. It was in the *Home and Farm*, published in Springfield, Mass., and she went on editing it for years after she moved out to Kentucky."

"The week after she died, at the age of 82 years, a check for \$85 arrived, her pay. Then her daughter, Mrs. H. D. Pittman, was the first woman society editor in the country, on the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*."

"So I had some grounds for literary aims which, nevertheless, I never thought of taking up at first. In fact, and it's a dreadful fact to be whispered, I was conditioned in Walesley."

"After a year there I decided I didn't approve of college for girls of that age. I liked the good times, but not the prescribed studies. Then, one day I woke up and found that I had won a Peabody Institute prize, a scholarship to study art in Europe for three years. I went, and showed my miniatures in the Salon two years."

"In spare moments I did a little bit of newspaper correspondence. Then I went back to Tennessee and opened up a studio. I thought art was my vocation. But I got in with a coterie of women who wrote the author of 'A Great Rider's Wife' is among them and I thought I'd like to try my hand at writing a book. I wrote 'Miss Selina Lue.'"

The heroine of Miss Daviess's first tale is a mother-hearted maiden lady who nominally runs a grocery in a little town, but whose chief business is with her "soap boxes," needless little waifs that she gathers in and mothers in a curious row of soap boxes ranged in the back of her store, capacious, clean soap boxes.

OF TWO UNHAPPY LOVERS.

An English Version of Bedier's Romance of Trietram and Iseult.

Of the three leading gift books published by the Lippincott Company for this holiday season, the offering to readers of a serious mood is a second rendering into English of Joseph Bedier's "The Romance of Trietram and Iseult," which Hilare Belloc was the only previous translator. The newer translator is Florence Simmonds, whose version brings out admirably the native child wonder spirit, the color and the artistic grace which M. Bedier preserved in reconstructing the epic from the fragments of the old romances.

Upon the story of Trietram and Iseult in its various forms has been focused a great part of modern interest in the Arthurian legend, both from the purely historical viewpoint, from which the poems are a mine of evidence about medieval times and customs, and from the more poetic viewpoint of those who love old romance for its own sake. The

got a duty laid on 'em strong, even if it is just being a kinder soul mother." "Do you know," says Miss Selina Lue's creator, "that the shopgirls in Nashville call me Miss Selina Lue, the girl where I buy my hats and try on my dresses?" And the comely young woman laughs contentedly. "Maybe I am Miss Selina Lue."

"Plenty of good meaning people have told me what a pity it was that I didn't have some of my own, &c. I don't have to answer them any more. I just give them my book to read."

"Miss Selina Lue" was just the writing out of what came in my day's work. "The Road to Providence" is the same. From the window of my home I can see the road to Providence itself, though of course Providence isn't the real name. But the conditions and the people are all true."

"That is what makes writing easiest and, I think, most worth while. Don't think I don't take the work seriously because I've been speaking lightly. In these days especially, I think one ought to strive hardest to write true, simple and sweet stories of real life."

"My greatest pride is that the shopgirls at home all know me because they have wanted to read and have read my book, and because they call me Miss Selina Lue. If I can't write pretentiously or valuably I want to write simply helpfully."

"Much as I like writing, I can't give up my farming. Truth to tell, I don't believe I could do it but for the farming. I'm sure I could never write a line here in New York. And one of my friends tells me that the chicken motif is the strongest one in 'The Road to Providence' that the chickens throughout reflect the characters and the story."

"At any rate I shall never give up my farmyard. Little Sister, the youngest of the Jerseys, is the thirty-sixth lineal descendant of the line that has given milk to our family through the years. Do you wonder that I prize her? So I'm going back to Nashville to my farming, where I'm going to try some new experiments next spring or summer. Between times I'll work on my new book."

Here are some of the sayings of Miss Selina Lue, of whom the creator is glad to be called the prototype:

"If grownups would just chaw one another's good luck they could get a heap of satisfaction from it."

"Vanity is a man like a turkey gobbler—a strutting in November."

"I don't hold with thinking up had happenings onto people, for some time it might kinder hit 'em on some blind side we don't know about and take 'em."

"They can't nobody tell what a mortgage and a golf club will do."

"When I see a curl of religion sprouting up I think it's best for kinder shine."

Mother Mayberry on what she calls the "woman's rights and wrongs question": "But, not knowing any more about it than I do, I think this woman's rumpus all sounds kinder like a hen scratching around in unlikely and contrary corners for the bread of life, when she knows there is plenty of crumbs at the kitchen door to be set up."

Among other bits of Mother Mayberry's philosophy are: "Some folks act like they had dispepsy of the mind."

"It's my opinion they ain't nothing in the world so heavy as empty hands."

"A wife oughtn't to stand on no pedestal for a man, but she have got no call to make squaw tracks behind him neither."

"I don't hold with a body using their own duty as a stick to fray out other folks with."

"Religion oughter be taken as a cooling draught to the soul and not stuck on like life a fly blaster."

"It's a mighty dried up mind that can't leap out in a change onet in a while, and it's mostly men folks that take a notion, then pettily to stone in it."

"The man is Peter Rugg, and the story goes that he left Boston with his little daughter Betty about the time of the Boston massacre (1770). At Menotomy, now Arlington, a few miles out of Boston, a storm overtook them, and although invited to spend the night by a friend Rugg swore an oath either to get home that night or never to see home again. He never reached home, and thenceforth

was always travelling, bobbing up from Virginia to New Hampshire, and always asking the way to Boston. If by chance he happened to reach Boston, his great black horse ran so fast through the streets that the houses shook, but Rugg could not stop. A cloud and storm always followed him, and horses took fright at his approach. On one occasion while a race between two horses was in progress in Virginia Rugg's chaise appeared on the track and beat the contestants."

Flying Dutchman is what he turns up fifty years after his oath at his home on Milk street and finds his house torn down and the land under the auctioneer's hammer. He is told by one in the crowd that there is nothing strange there but himself; he is not fitted for the present age, and will never find a home on earth. That is the last seen of him.

The book has an introduction by Thomas Wentworth Higginson and pen and ink and wash illustrations by F. J. Alford.

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